

BLM Study Review of Hells Canyon Complex Studies

VEGETATION OF THE SNAKE RIVER CORRIDOR IN HELLS CANYON - Weiser, Idaho, to the Salmon River

Technical Report Appendix E.3.3-1

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1.INTRODUCTION

This technical report is an inventory of vegetation associations and plant communities within one half mile of the river and reservoirs. My review focused primarily on the introduced species and noxious weeds discussions.

2.CONCLUSION

This was not an intensive inventory but was a large sampling of vegetation types within the canyon. There were no real definitive conclusions as such except in the **Exotic Weeds** Section at 4.4.3 on page 45 and in the **Management Implications** Section at 4.5 on page 48. The BLM agrees with the basic observations stated in these two sections for the most part. There was an awareness of the role of past human activities and disturbances in the establishment of noxious weeds, and the implications for future management actions.

However, one area of concern is that in a couple of places, page 46 for one, the report implies that allowing Brownlee Reservoir to fluctuate as much as it does is a good thing as it prevents the establishment of riparian vegetation. This includes noxious riparian species as large water level fluctuations “. . . impedes downstream infestation of many weedy species through riverine processes”.

The above statement is true and there is a recognized risk of noxious riparian weeds establishing as well as desirable native riparian vegetation. However, this rationale certainly downplays the benefits that would occur from re-establishing 110 miles of perennial riparian vegetation, counting both sides of Brownlee Reservoir.

3.STUDY ADEQUACY

The vegetation inventory was probably adequate for this level of analysis; especially considering past surveys or studies within the canyon were limited in the areas covered.

4.BLM CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS:

This inventory appeared to be a good sampling of the major vegetation communities within the canyon.

We are uncomfortable with using the risk of increased noxious weed infestations as reason to promote present management; particularly if changes in management could lead to enhancements in reservoir vegetation conditions. Benefits to warm water fisheries and other resources would result as well from a stable pool and eventual establishment of riparian vegetation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

These reports should be written to be as objective as possible and not be used as instruments to promote Idaho Power Co.'s desire to maintain current management actions. While the risk from riparian noxious weeds is real, it shouldn't override the recognition of the benefits that could occur with the establishment of riparian habitat along many miles of shoreline.